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Comparison of freshman college grades of 1957 National Merit Scholars with those of Certificate of Merit winners showed that the former do significantly better than the latter. Results indicate "that selection process has been effective in identifying the students who will do well in the freshman college year."

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The Undergraduate Achievement of National Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit Winners

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THE relative achievement of National Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit winners is of importance since the success of these groups in their first year of college is one estimate of the validity of the selection process. The present study[1] compares the freshman college grades of the second groups (1957 Program) of Scholars and Certificate winners. The samples consist of 743 Merit Scholars (89.1 per cent of the Scholars appointed) and 579 Certificate of Merit winners (55.4 per cent of a one-sixth random sample of all Certificate winners).

In the following tables, three kinds of comparisons have been made. Table 1 shows the total distribution of grades for Merit Scholars and Certificate winners.[2] Table 2 gives within-state comparisons. Table 3 indicates the relative achievement of these groups within colleges. In all three comparisons, Merit Scholars surpass Certificate of Merit winners in their first year of college study.

Table 1 clearly indicates that Merit Scholars achieve higher grades than do Certificate of Merit winners.[3] The median test of this difference is significant beyond the .001 level for both male and female samples. The within-state comparisons of these samples are given in Table 2. Note

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TABLE 1. Freshman Grades for Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit Winners

	Males		*Females*	
Honor Point Ratio	*M.S.*	*C of M*	*M.S.*	*C of M*
3.75–4.00	100	52	44	27
3.50–3.74	94	45	39	17
3.25–3.49	84	51	31	19
3.00–3.24	76	62	25	33
2.75–2.99	44	42	19	31
2.50–2.74	53	52	20	20
2.25–2.49	41	38	7	9
2.00–2.24	27	29	6	6
1.75–1.99	11	16	3	1
1.50–1.74	8	13	1	4
1.49 or below	10	9	0	3
Total Students	548	409	195	170
Median	3.26	3.00	3.33	3.06
P diff.	.001		.001	

[1]This study was partially supported by research grants from the National Science Foundation and the Old Dominion Foundation.

[2]All grades were converted by an honor-point ratio formula where A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0; grades were multiplied by credits per course and divided by total credits carried.

[3]Actually, Merit Scholars also receive a Certificate of Merit. In this comparison, Certificate of Merit refers to those finalists not receiving a scholarship.

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TABLE 1. Median Honor Point Ratios for NM Scholars and Certificate of Merit Winners by State

	Boys		Girls			Boys		Girls	
	M.S.	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*		*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*
Ala.	3.02(11)	3.29 (4)	3.52 (6)	3.24 (4)	Neb.	3.52 (6)	2.73 (6)	2.71 (3)	3.54 (2)
Ariz.	2.68 (2)	2.88 (1)	3.45 (2)	3.96 (1)	Nev.	2.85 (1)	— (0)	— (0)	— (0)
Ark.	2.31(12)	2.58 (6)	3.17 (2)	2.75 (3)	N.H.	— (0)	3.42 (1)	— (0)	2.78 (1)
Cal.	3.16(41)	3.11(28)	3.56(10)	2.61 (5)	N.J.	2.98(16)	2.65(18)	3.30 (6)	2.92 (7)
Colo.	2.67 (9)	3.35 (3)	3.78 (1)	— (0)	N.M.	3.39 (4)	1.71 (1)	— (0)	2.62 (2)
Conn.	3.15(10)	2.84(10)	3.46 (2)	2.57 (1)	N.Y.	3.33(41)	3.05(39)	3.36(19)	3.39(11)
Del.	3.25 (1)	— (0)	— (0)	— (0)	N.C.	3.43(11)	3.20(14)	3.09 (7)	3.03 (3)
D.C.	3.31 (3)	3.71 (1)	— (0)	2.71 (1)	N.D.	3.35 (3)	2.89 (4)	3.52 (1)	2.13 (1)
Fla.	3.24 (8)	2.61 (4)	2.64 (5)	3.40 (2)	Ohio	3.38(25)	3.00(23)	3.46(10)	2.83 (3)
Ga.	3.19 (6)	3.16 (5)	3.52 (5)	3.40 (3)	Okla.	3.31(11)	3.28 (5)	3.00 (3)	3.06 (7)
Ida.	3.34 (5)	2.62 (2)	— (0)	2.56 (3)	Ore.	3.25 (6)	3.53 (7)	3.10 (3)	2.74 (2)
Ill.	3.12(35)	3.00(26)	3.57 (9)	3.18 (8)	Pa.	3.15(44)	2.84(29)	3.44(11)	3.23(16)
Ind.	3.54(20)	3.51(13)	3.33 (2)	2.98 (5)	R.I.	3.22 (3)	2.34 (3)	3.79 (1)	— (0)
Iowa	3.69(14)	3.28 (5)	2.86 (3)	2.95 (4)	S.C.	3.03 (5)	2.31 (4)	2.81 (4)	— (0)
Kan.	3.78 (9)	3.15 (7)	3.20 (3)	2.72 (4)	S.D.	3.44 (2)	3.81 (1)	3.57 (3)	3.53 (1)
Ky.	3.53 (4)	2.95 (6)	3.50 (5)	2.90 (1)	Tenn.	3.00 (7)	3.09(11)	3.04 (8)	— (0)
La.	3.28 (9)	3.33 (6)	2.95 (4)	3.49 (1)	Tex.	2.96(26)	3.14(16)	2.62 (6)	3.47(10)
Me.	2.30 (3)	3.46 (3)	2.89 (1)	— (0)	Utah	4.00 (3)	3.32 (5)	3.44 (2)	3.23 (2)
Md.	3.30 (5)	3.07 (4)	3.40 (3)	3.58 (1)	Vt.	2.41 (1)	— (0)	3.38 (1)	3.24 (1)
Mass.	3.29(20)	2.73(16)	2.90 (6)	2.89 (8)	Va.	3.42(11)	2.65 (9)	2.95 (2)	3.17 (6)
Mich.	3.23(17)	3.29(15)	3.44(13)	3.08 (8)	Wash.	3.03 (9)	2.92 (8)	3.32 (4)	2.42 (2)
Minn.	3.22(11)	3.07 (6)	3.37 (7)	3.90 (6)	W.Va.	3.02(10)	2.67 (8)	3.53 (2)	3.40 (3)
Miss.	3.11 (7)	3.00 (3)	3.68 (2)	3.00 (4)	Wisc.	3.33(17)	3.30 (8)	3.91 (3)	2.98 (8)
Mo.	3.26(16)	2.97 (9)	3.72 (3)	2.79 (5)	Wy.	3.59 (2)	3.50 (1)	— (0)	2.00 (1)
Mont.	3.03 (4)	2.54 (4)	— (0)	— (0)	Terr.	3.12 (2)	1.51 (1)	3.27 (2)	3.24 (3)

Note.—Numbers in parentheses equal number of students. The number of differences favoring Scholars is statistically significant. Sign tests indicate that the number of these positive differences is significant beyond the .05 level for both males and females.

that the median honor-point ratio for Scholars is generally higher than that for Certificate of Merit winners. This result is statistically significant. This particular comparison is especially meaningful since the selection board makes its decisions about students within rather than between states; that is, it considers and compares only students within a given state.

Within-college comparisons for the Merit Scholars and Certificate winners are shown in Table 3. For ten colleges having large concentrations of students from the two groups, 12 of the 14 comparisons between Scholars and Certificate winners favor the Scholars. This result is statistically significant.

Discussion

Taken together, the results indicate that the total selection process has been effective in identifying the students who will do well in the freshman college year. This is a substantial achievement when one realizes that Scholars and Certificate winners differ only slightly in their potentials for college work and in their obtained freshman grades. This particular

TABLE 3. Within-College Comparisons for Scholars and Certificate of Merit Winners Attending 10 Selected Colleges

	CIT		*Harvard*		*MIT*		*U. of Mich.*		*Princeton*	
	M.S.	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*
3.50–4.00	1	3	15	2	13	0	2	6	6	0
3.00–3.49	4	3	20	8	14	4	3	4	7	4
2.50–2.99	8	2	13	4	9	3	1	0	5	7
2.00–2.49	3	0	8	6	9	10	0	1	6	6
1.99 or below	1	1	4	1	5	6	3	0	1	2
Total	17	9	60	21	50	23	9	11	25	19
Median	2.94	3.36	3.05	2.78	3.03	2.18	3.23	3.51	3.00	2.60

	Rice		*Stanford*		*Yale*		*Radcliffe*		*Wellesley*	
	M.S.	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*	*M.S.*	*C.M.*
3.50–4.00	0	2	8	2	3	1	3	0	2	0
3.00–3.49	5	1	4	4	9	7	6	2	6	3
2.50–2.99	5	2	5	1	5	11	5	6	6	6
2.00–2.49	3	1	0	3	7	3	0	2	0	1
1.99 or below	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Total	14	7	17	10	25	24	14	10	14	10
Median	2.81	2.78	3.40	3.13	2.90	2.68	3.00	2.89	3.15	2.80

Note.—Female samples for four of the colleges in Table 3 have been omitted. All comparisons within these very small samples favor the Merit Scholar groups. A sign test indicates that the number of differences favoring Scholars is significant beyond the .05 level.

analysis does not enable us to distinguish the relative values of the specific kinds of information used in the selection process or to assess the effectiveness of the selection board itself. A previous report, however, has studied the relative values of the selection tests and high-school grades.[4] Other studies which will determine the relative value of the screening tests as well as of other personality and attitudinal variables are now in progress.

[4]Holland, J. L. Prediction of Scholastic Success for a High Aptitude Sample. *School and Society*, 1958, 86, 290-293.